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Allegan County News
Allegan, Michigan

NEWS RELEASE

IMPORTANT MEETING and SUPERFUND UPDATE

The Kalamazoo River Protection Association (KRPA) and the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council (KRWC) will co-sponsor a major meeting involving progress on the Kalamazoo River and Lake Allegan Superfund Cleanup.

The Superfund meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 29, 2002. Bill Muno, Director of US EPA's, Region V Superfund Division will attend and inform interested parties and citizens as to EPA's plan to bring about a timely cleanup of the PCB contamination in our river with special emphasis on Lake Allegan. Mr. Muno is the key decision maker at this site and will respond to questions from the public. Your attendance and comments are needed at this critical time. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm and be held in the auditorium at the Allegan County Area Technical and Education Center located at 2891 116th avenue (M-222), about two miles East of the City of Allegan. The KRPA, KRWC, and MDEQ will be making brief presentations.

US EPA has taken over the "leadership" at this site. That's good news. We have advocated for this change since 1997, when it became clear that remedial action was not likely to occur as long as the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) had the lead. The MDEQ defaulted on continuing the lead on this site. After stalling meaningful efforts for over a decade, Russell Harding, Governor Englers' hand picked director of the MDEQ requested in May of 2001 that EPA take over the lead on this site. Please attend this important meeting at this critical period in the restoration of our river and its wildlife.

For more information contact Dayle Harrison (KRPA) at 616-686-7822 or 857-4131 or Robert Beck (KRWC) at 616-793-7393.

Residents decry pollution along Kalamazoo River. The river is one of the most PCB-contaminated waters in the United States, a speaker charges.

Myron Kukla / The Grand Rapids Press
10/19/2000 The Grand Rapids Press 2 Page L1 (Copyright 2000)

SAUGATUCK -- Eagles are returning to nest along the Kalamazoo River.

But that is not a good thing, according to Dayle Harrison of the Kalamazoo River Protection Association.

"The river will kill them," he said. "We should keep the eagles out of the river system."

Harrison said the Kalamazoo River is one of the most PCB- contaminated rivers in the United States.

PCB is a carcinogen that was used in manufacturing paper products and many other industrial and commercial goods.

Speaking at a meeting of the KRPA Wednesday in Saugatuck, Harrison said there are PCB concentrations along the river where the contamination is not safe for animals or humans.

Harrison charged that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality , the state agency responsible for protecting the environment, has dragged its feet and stalled river cleanup for more than a decade.

He said the cleanup may never occur now because Superfund, the federal budget established to help clean up the most serious environmental pollution sites, is now almost out of money.

"The (DEQ) didn't do the job that should have been done and now it's too late," said Harrison, noting that department took 10 years to do an environmental assessment of half the river. The assessment is just now being made available to the public.

Frustration at the delays in river improvements were voiced by many of the 30 people who attended the meeting.

"All of these years have gone by and nothing has been done by them or the EPA ," said Bob Coyle, a long-time environmentalist who lives on Lake Allegan, one of the river's many polluted hot spots. "They cater to the big business interests not the people."

Harrison charged that MDEQ Director Russel Harding removed Scott Corneilus, a DEQ project director on the Kalamazoo River since 1990, to appease companies that are responsible for the pollution.

"Mr. Corneilus' removal was without merit and amounts to a clear example that the polluters are far too much in charge of the so- called cleanup," he said.

Brian von Gunten DEQ representative and project manager of the Kalamazoo River/Portage Creek cleanup, said it is often the tactic of polluters to do anything they can to forestall doing cleanups, including legal action and even funding their own environmental impact studies.

He said one of the identified polluters, Allied Paper Co., has gone out of business.

A recent study of Lake Kalamazoo in Saugatuck found that 86 percent of core samples of lake sediment had PCBs with 71 percent of the samples high enough to provide ecological risk to fish and mammals.

Animals are affected by as little as 1 part per million in the environment, while 4 parts per million is safe for humans.

Von Gunten said results of the remedial investigation and feasibility study still are being analyzed and evaluated.

"But 100 percent of the samples were less than one part per million in the Lake Kalamazoo sediment in the top two inches," he said.

The concentration in some areas of the lake increase the deeper you dig, he said.

He said an EPA required cleanup of Portage Creek, a tributary to the Kalamazoo River, cost \$7 million and took care of less than 1 percent of the river system.



Kalamazoo River
Protection Association

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Protecting the Kalamazoo River Watershed and the Great Lakes

(616) 686-7822 / 857-1791
krpa@accn.org

P.O. Box 408
325 Hubbard Street
Allegan, MI 49010

KALAMAZOO RIVER CLEANUP IN JEOPARDY

*** ACTION ALERT ***

The polluter's plan for the River from Lake Allegan upstream to Comstock is to leave Lake Allegan and the impounded area above the City of Allegan dam as permanent toxic PCB disposal dumps in the river. Also their plan calls for placing some rip-rap materials along the riverbanks of the Trowbridge, Otsego and Plainwell Dams owned by the public (Michigan Department of Natural Resources) and not remove the toxic contamination (over a million cubic yards). This is the do almost nothing approach and will not result in a meaningful cleanup of the millions of cubic yards river sediments contaminated with toxic PCBs in our River.

The KRPA's plan provides for the removal of the contamination and protection of human health of sportsman and their families, wildlife and the environment. Our plan will hold the polluters accountable for the cost of the cleanup and bring about a much-improved fishery and recreational use, including tourism on the river.

The MDEQ erred big time when they put the polluters in charge of preparing the documents. No one should be surprised at the self-serving plan they came up with. Enough is Enough. The failure of the polluters to come up with a meaningful plan must be challenged. The KRPA and others have requested that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) or the MEDQ staff with the aid of their consultants Camp Dresser and McKee complete the RI/FS for this stretch of the river as well as the section from Lake Allegan downstream to Saugatuck. This has happened at other sites in the Great Lakes and the Nation. The US EPA and individual state's like Wisconsin (Completed the RI/FS on Fox River) have take over the completion of RI/FS's at numerous sites. We need to do that in Michigan as well. In fact, the Administrative Order by Consent signed in fall of 1999 by the MDEQ and polluters provides the authority.

The polluters, with easy access to the Director of the MDEQ, Russell Harding, Governor John Engler's appointment, have been able to "cut corners" and stall meaningful progress at this site for over a decade. It is time for the MDEQ to take full control and complete the RI/FS. If the MDEQ does not act, the polluters will drag out the completion of the RI/FS for many years. The draft RI/FS submitted needs to be almost completely rewritten. The RI/FS is the background document that provides for the kind of cleanup to be outlined in the Proposed Plan (PP) which forms the basis for the final cleanup in the Record of Decision (ROD). However, citizens, sportsman, river lovers, local officials and whoever, must act now to make sure that the kind of cleanup needed becomes one of the main cleanup alternatives reviewed and included in the Feasibility Study. If our alternative is not included, we will likely be stuck with a much inferior cleanup plan such as natural attenuation, the "let nature takes its course" plan.

It is now the 10-year anniversary since the River was placed on the National Priorities List under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, commonly called the Superfund Act. The polluter's current names are Georgia Pacific Corp, Plainwell, Inc., Fort James Corp and the former Allied Paper Co.'s parent company HM Holdings, Inc. Almost all the other sites on the National Priorities List under Superfund have had the RI/FS and Proposed Plan completed many years ago, with final remediation taking place. The Kalamazoo River cleanup cost will be similar to that of the Hudson River Cleanup that we hear about on the News.

KRPA recommendations for the RI/FS and river cleanup alternative

First, the responsibility for completion of the RI/FS for Lake Allegan upstream to Morrow Pond should be immediately taken away from the polluters and be completed by the MDEQ with the help of their consultants who completed the Ecological Risk Assessment. Also, the RI/FS for the River downstream of Lake Allegan, not yet started, should be completed by the MDEQ and not the polluters.

Second: Include the KRPA's Recommendations for a meaningful Cleanup Alternative to reviewed and made a part of the RI/FS and the Proposed Plan.

The KRPA supports cleanup standards consistent with the ecological risk assessment and human health assessment. To meet these goals the PCB cleanup standard for river sediments is .12 parts per million (ppm) and .5 ppm in floodplain sediments above the ordinary high water mark.

The KRPA recommends that the technologies of wet and dry (preferred) dredging be used at Lake Allegan, the impounded area upstream of the City of Allegan Dam, and the area above the City of Otsego Dam. A combination of earth excavating, dry and/or wet dredging should be made at the Trowbridge, Otsego and Plainwell impoundments owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Other remaining contaminants in the river should be removed by the appropriate technology. All PCB contaminated waste must be disposed of off site and in approved landfills. No landfills should be allowed adjacent to the river, the DNR impoundments, Lake Allegan and the backwater above the City of Allegan dam. All wetlands and other significant natural resources should be restored as part of the Final Remedial Action.

Remedial action should start at Lake Allegan and move upstream. Over 70 percent of the contaminated sediments are in Lake Allegan and above the City of Allegan impoundment. The delays involved with starting upstream and going downstream will result in more contamination going into the lower river and Lake Michigan.

The RI/FS should be completed within four months for Lake Allegan Upstream to Morrow Pond with a Proposed Plan to follow 30 days later. The RI/FS should be completed for the river downstream of Lake Allegan by July 1, 2001. The same cleanup standards indicated above should apply to downstream reaches of the river.

Please send your comments to Russell Harding, Director of the MDEQ and to Francis X. Lyons, Regional Administrator, US EPA. Also, write, email, and call your state and federal legislators requesting that they write to Mr. Harding and Mr. Lyons in support of your position. We would like a copy of your letter(s) and e-mail as well. Thanks.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 25, 2001

Contact: Ken Silfven
(517) 241-7397

State Seeks EPA Lead on Kalamazoo River Cleanup Transition recognizes federal agency's ultimate control of site

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality is asking the federal government to redesignate the Kalamazoo River Superfund site as a "federal lead" site.

In a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, DEQ Director Russell Harding said that the transition more accurately reflects the EPA's increased level of involvement in the project. The site currently is handled as a state enforcement lead even though the EPA controls critical aspects of the remedy selection process.

Harding pointed out that local environmental and citizen groups have advocated a federal lead.

"Area residents are understandably anxious to see a remedy put into place," Harding said. "The state also is ready to move forward. It is apparent, though, that the critical step is the completion of EPA's decision-making process. While the DEQ will continue to have significant input, it is appropriate that the federal government assumes the formal lead."

Harding's letter outlines four reasons for the transition:

- The EPA advises that federal permits are needed for all remedial work conducted by the liable parties unless done under a legal agreement with the federal government. Such a legal agreement does not exist, potentially posing an administrative burden to a cleanup performed under state lead.
- The liable parties must resolve their legal responsibilities with the EPA as well as with the state before they will implement a cleanup. This requires the EPA to be intimately involved with the remedy selection and that the remedy be implemented in accordance with a legally binding agreement with the federal agency.
- The EPA is essentially controlling critical aspects of the remedy selection process. EPA staff recently informed the state that substantial additional data collection is necessary to support the EPA's national decision-making process. In addition, the EPA is raising new issues concerning the ecological and human-health risk assessments, which must be finalized in order to establish cleanup criteria and make decisions on a remedy for the river.

● The EPA is advising the state that the remedy also must be reviewed by outside entities such as the EPA's National Remedy Review Board before a course of action is finalized. The state has no control over this review.

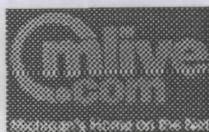
The DEQ will still provide technical assistance to the EPA. It will remain involved in the investigation and cleanup work at the source areas to make sure they are secured. The DEQ also will identify conditions that must be met to satisfy state law and protect public health.

In 1987, the state filed suit against Allied Paper Inc. for releases of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The Kalamazoo River was designated as a federal Superfund site in 1990.

Fieldwork for the remedial investigation began in 1993 under state direction. Since then, more than 500,000 tons of PCB-contaminated sediments and soils have been removed or isolated. Last year, an investigation began in the lower reaches of the river with the collection of more than 1,300 sediment cores downstream of the Lake Allegan dam.

"The state intends to remain an active partner," Harding said. "We believe that expediting a cleanup plan is in the best interests of area residents and the resource. But the dual role of the state and federal governments has made it difficult for citizens to effectively follow the process. This change will clarify the line of accountability for the public. I encourage the EPA to work with us and make the transition plan a priority."

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**KALAMAZOO
EDITION**



NEWS with **Kalamazoo Gazette**

State asks EPA to take lead in river cleanup

Wednesday, July 25, 2001

BY BILL KRASEAN
KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Citing frustration with delays he said are out of his control, the head of Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality has asked the Environmental Protection Agency to take over the lead in efforts to clean up the Kalamazoo River.

Russell Harding made the request in a letter Tuesday to the EPA's David Ullrich, acting Region 5 administrator.

"We have been frustrated and citizens have been frustrated for some time by the pace of the remediation," Harding said in an interview Tuesday. "We see it as a truth-in-advertising issue. We can't progress without the EPA's approval, and we get the blame from the environmental people for the slow pace. I don't mind being criticized if I have some control. But I'm not in control."

William Muno, director of the EPA's Region 5 Superfund Division, said Tuesday that while he had not seen the letter, if the state relinquishes it's role as the lead agency, the EPA takes over "by default."

"Long-term, this is a positive thing," Muno said, since it will allow the EPA to implement

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remediation practices learned at other PCB-contaminated sites in other states.

Brian von Gunten, a DEQ environmental quality analyst who oversees the Kalamazoo River Superfund site, said he expects that it may be fall before the EPA takes charge of the site.

"Many who have followed the frustratingly slow progress on the cleanup of the Kalamazoo River under DEQ leadership have advocated that EPA take over the process," said Don Brown, a retired Western Michigan University chemistry professor.

Brown has followed the river cleanup process for many years as a Sierra Club representative on the Kalamazoo Environmental Council.

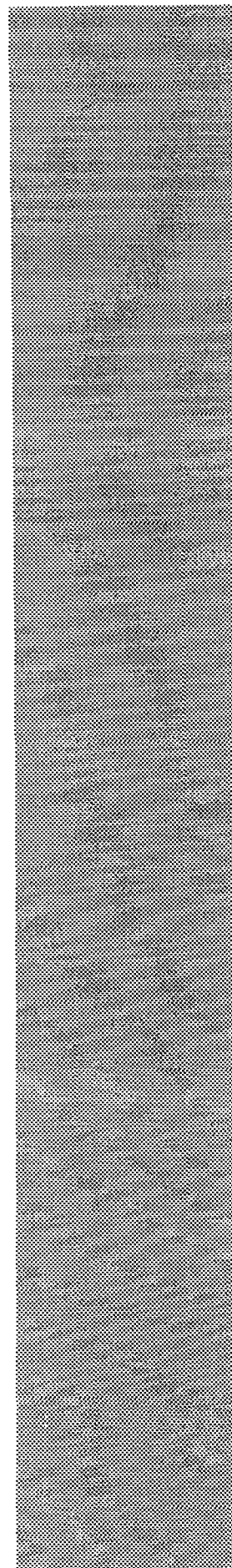
"Now that director Harding also has suggested that," Brown said, "one is led to question two things: What is Michigan's commitment to assuring the quality of our state's water resources and, given current federal funding of EPA, does that agency have the capacity to run the cleanup?"

Brown said he thinks the change will slow the remediation process down, at least initially. "Who knows in the long run," he said.

In 1990, the Kalamazoo River from Kalamazoo to Lake Michigan was declared a federal Superfund site. The 70-mile stretch has sediments containing PCBs left over from paper company practices during the 1950s, '60s and early '70s.

PCBs are considered toxic to wildlife who live along the river and to people who eat fish caught in the river. Michigan's Department of Community Health issues a yearly guide that details what fish should and should not be eaten and by whom.

Four paper companies have been charged with responsibility for the contamination and for paying for a lengthy study of the residual contamination and any cleanup.



Earlier this year a firm representing the paper companies proposed a cleanup process and the DEQ was to have had a counterproposal this summer.

"We thought a year ago that we would be meeting with the DEQ in June to talk about a final remediation," said Mark Brown, vice president of the engineering firm Blasland & Bouck Engineers. B&B was hired to oversee remediation by the paper companies, who have spent more than \$25 million so far.

The EPA, however, asked for more samples from the site, delaying the discussion, he said.

"There will be administrative benefits of having the EPA in charge that will speed up some processes," Mark Brown said. "But I do see that it may add time to the process early on.

"We want things to go quickly. But we're now in a wait-and-see mode."

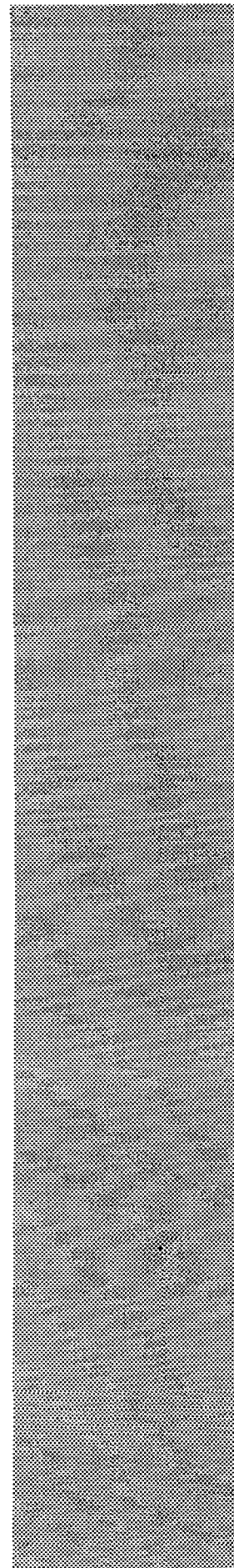
Harding said residents "are understandably anxious to see a remedy put into place. The state is also ready to move forward. It is apparent, though, that the critical step is the completion of the EPA's decision-making process."

Von Gunten said the DEQ will continue to work closely with the EPA on the site, providing technical and other expertise. It will continue with periodic public sessions to update citizens on the progress of the remediation, he said.

One of those meetings starts at 7 p.m. tonight in the Comfort Inn in Plainwell.

Von Gunten said that of the 67 sites in Michigan undergoing remediation for contamination, about 50 are led by the EPA. "The lead role changes back and forth fairly commonly," he said, especially about the time that the agencies are drafting remediation plans.

Harding said that typically the state begins remediation at cleanup sites within three years



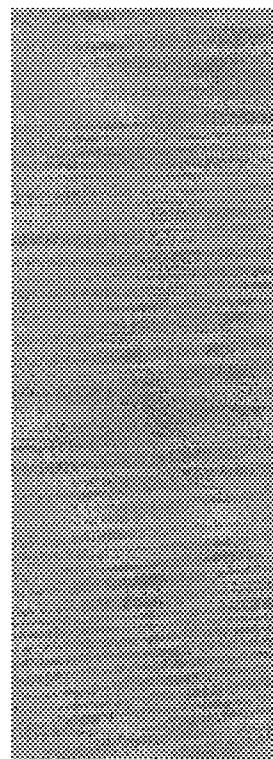
while EPA-led sites can take up to 10 years.

He said that the Kalamazoo River was one of the biggest and most complicated sites in the state and would take longer than most. "The EPA will do the best job to reduce the (health) risks of PCBs," he said, "and to make things better on the river.

"The river will never be the same as it was before settlements, however."

Von Gunten said the change will also allow the paper companies to take action - based on state and federal mandates - that would be final. The EPA, he said, would not be able to come back later to demand additional work.

BILL KRASEAN can be reached at 388-8577 or bkrasean@kalamazoogazette.com.



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Thursday 22 August, 2002

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By Daniel G. Kelsey, Staff Writer

August 21, 2002

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State and federal environmental agents focused on the fate of dams and the schedules for cleanup of contaminated sediments at the eighth Kalamazoo River roundtable Monday, Aug. 19. They spoke to more than 50 citizens attending the two-hour meeting sponsored by the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council at the Plainwell Comfort Inn.

Sharon Hanshue of the fisheries division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources gave a Power-Point presentation about six dams in the middle stretches of the river. The Calkins Bridge dam that creates Lake Allegan, Hanshue said, still licensed for power production through 2010, will stay in place. Although the Otsego City dam is in bad condition, she said, Otsego has no funding to pursue removal. The Allegan City dam underwent recent repairs.

"Because a significant amount of money has been spent on that dam, it's going to stay there," Hanshue said.

The former Plainwell, Otsego and Trowbridge dams represented a nearer issue for the DNR.

"We're the owner of three of these lovely dams," Hanshue said.

Built just after 1900, all three dams have been ranked by the state as high hazards. Removal of the three powerhouses in 1986 and 1987 left only spillways at the sites. The DNR stabilized the remains in 2000 and 2001, Hanshue said, and will put more work into the sites over the next three to five years.

"They are in terrible condition," she said. "They're in such poor condition we can't just patch them."

She said the Plainwell, Otsego and Trowbridge dams would have to be either fully taken out and restored or simply taken out.

"We want to take them out," she said.

Shari Kolak, manager of the Kalamazoo River Superfund site for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said the state's process of making a decision on the dams' fate would not delay the start of the federal cleanup of

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contaminated waste in the watershed.

"It's going to take a long time to study the effect dam removal will have," Kolak said. "We are not going to wait for these dams to come out."

An EPA schedule called for a final plan for cleanup of the Plainwell and Otsego city impoundments to be ready by fall 2003 and cleanup to begin by fall 2005. A contractor for cleanup of paper wastes in that stretch has already been brought on board.

"Our division committed that we would issue a plan by next year," Kolak said. "We want some sort of cleanup now."

Simultaneously, she said, the EPA will study the river from its headwaters to Morrow Lake east of Kalamazoo.

The EPA will negotiate with responsible companies for feasibility studies of cleanups behind downstream dams such as the Calkins Bridge dam. Kolak said cleanup plans will be forthcoming after completion of negotiations. River activist Dayle Harrison objected.

"Don't use Morrow Lake as a rationale for delaying remedial work downstream," Harrison said.

Kolak defended the EPA position.

"We need to investigate upstream sources to Morrow Lake," she said. "It makes no sense to clean up downstream when we still have sources upstream."

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Kalamazoo River cleanup plans considered

Friday, October 3, 2003

BY BILL KRASEAN
KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Imagine a Kalamazoo River rich in sport fish, a canoe and kayak haven from Morrow Dam to Lake Michigan.

A river where eagles and great blue herons soar and mink and muskrats feast on an abundance of aquatic critters.

Such a vision was a common theme among citizen groups and state and federal officials who gathered Thursday afternoon on the first day of a four-day Kalamazoo RiverFest, co-sponsored by the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council.

Many who spoke called for a quick solution to current problems with contaminated sediments and soils downstream from Kalamazoo and what to do with five

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decaying dams along the way.

An 80-mile stretch of the river is a Superfund site.

How to fulfill that vision and how fast to do it remains a matter of debate.

"The Kalamazoo River is not a tourist destination like the Muskegon and Manistee rivers," said Robert Beck, council vice president. His group wants the river to be "a magnet for recreation and tourism and an economic asset for local communities," he said.

"But we are pragmatic and recognize that attaining this ultimate goal can only happen by a series of steps, first and foremost of which is a satisfactory resolution of the PCB contamination problem."

The council's position paper was one of five presented.

Soils along the river and sediments, particularly just upstream of dams, are contaminated with tons of PCB-laced paper wastes left by paper-company practices in the middle of the last century.

The Environmental Protection Agency took over responsibility for river cleanup from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources a year-and-a-half ago.

Sharon Hanshue of the DNR fisheries division said "there has been pretty good progress in the last decade" in stopping more PCBs from entering the river from former paper-company landfills.

She said the DNR opposes any plans to keep five aging dams between Kalamazoo and Lake Allegan but that contaminants must be removed before the dams can go.

Dayle Harrison of the Kalamazoo River Protection Association called for the removal of all PCB-contaminated waste and the restoration of wetlands and other "significant natural resources" as part of the final solution.

All this takes time, said Shari Kolak, EPA remedial project manager. It will be years, she said, before any final solution. In the interim the EPA will tackle contamination one step at a time.

Although she said no decisions have been made about how much and where PCBs will be removed, or whether dams

will be eliminated or restored, she said none of the suggestions made Thursday has been eliminated from consideration.

Current plans to present a proposed feasibility study for cleanup in the Plainwell and Otsego areas are on hold, Kolak said, pending results of a U.S. Geological Survey river study. USGS crews are attempting to determine what the river's natural course would be if the dams were removed as well as the extent of any unusual future flooding.

Expected in November, the USGS study would affect any decision on cleanup details, she said.

A lack of a definitive timeline by the EPA was a source of frustration among many who spoke, as was indecision on removal of the dams.

Paper-company representatives -- who were not present -- have favored keeping the dams in place as a way to prevent contaminants from moving downstream.

Beck called such a proposal "in-stream hazardous-waste storage -- which is untenable."

"We are losing \$20 million a year in tourism," Harrison said. "We will lose hundreds of millions if you leave those dams in place."

Bill Krasean can be reached at 388-8577 or bkrasean@kalamazoogazette.com.

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JAMES HAHNENBERG

10/03/2003 01:50 PM

To: Shari Kolak
Subject: K-zoo article

Group holds public-policy forum on river cleanup

By JAMES PRICHARD
The Associated Press
10/3/03 7:54 AM

COMSTOCK, Mich. (AP) -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is awaiting a study by the U.S. Geological Survey before deciding on a partial cleanup plan for the Kalamazoo River Superfund site, an EPA official said.

Shari Kolak, the site's remedial project manager, said the EPA will select one of several alternatives as its plan after the agency receives and reviews preliminary study results, which are due in November.

"We really need to carefully consider these results before we issue a proposed plan," Kolak said during a public-policy forum Thursday.

The Kalamazoo River Watershed Council organized the event as a way to allow government agencies and private groups involved in the cleanup to express their positions and goals. It helped kick off the council's three-day Kalamazoo Riverfest, which concludes Saturday.

The agencies and groups provided visitors with written statements, called position papers, ranging from one to four pages in length. They also had representatives on hand who spoke briefly and answered questions.

Besides the EPA and the KRWC, others presenting position papers included the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Kalamazoo River Protection Association.

From the mid-1950s through the late 1980s, several paper-making companies in the Kalamazoo area dumped waste containing toxic polychlorinated biphenyls, called PCBs for short, directly into Portage Creek and the Kalamazoo River.

PCBs were also released into the groundwater and surface water from landfills where contaminated waste products were disposed. An estimated 10 million cubic yards of sediment on the river beds and banks were contaminated with the chemical compound, which is harmful to humans, fish and plants.

In August 1990, five miles of Portage Creek and an 80-mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River from Kalamazoo to Saugatuck, where the river empties into Lake Michigan, were designated a Superfund site.

Officials have called it one of the nation's largest and most complex Superfund sites.

The EPA assumed primary responsibility for the site cleanup in 2002 and it ultimately will choose the cleanup plan, which will take years to implement. Thirteen years after being designated a Superfund site, only a few of the most contaminated landfills and ponds have been cleaned up.

The EPA's two-phase approach will concentrate first on cleaning up the waterways from Kalamazoo to Lake Allegan. Then it will focus on the stretch of the Kalamazoo River from the Lake Allegan Dam to Lake Michigan.

Area resident Ken Kornheiser said the cleanup process is taking too long. He said the EPA would save time by abandoning its tentative plans to perform separate cleanups of the river beds and banks.

"What you need to understand is, anything short of that is not acceptable to the community," he told Kolak.

She responded that the cleanup needed to be approached in that way.

Enough waiting for river cleanup

The Holland Sentinel
Sunday, January 18, 2004

It has been more than 13 years since the federal government identified the Kalamazoo River and Portage Creek as a contaminated site and put it on the National Priorities List -- the Superfund List.

Since then, some cleanup has happened, including the excavation of 150,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments along Portage Creek and the restoration of a landfill and another disposal site along the Kalamazoo River to keep contamination from leaking into the river.

Still, the most difficult part of the project -- deciding what to do about the hundreds of thousands of pounds of toxic polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, along the bottom and flood plains along the Kalamazoo River -- hasn't been done. Completely dredging the contaminated river soils would cost as much as \$2 billion, which most parties agree is too steep a price.

The Kalamazoo River is in far better shape than it was in the 1950s and 1960s, when paper companies along the waterways dumped waste, including PCBs, into the creek and river. The federal government banned PCBs in 1978, and the Kalamazoo area paper industry gradually closed down and moved elsewhere.

Still, PCBs lurk beneath the water and in the soils of the floodplain, not only making it dangerous to consume fish caught in the Kalamazoo River, but also creating an impediment to post-industrial economic development along the riverfront.

Rivers have long been an asset to cities. In the beginning, they were both pre-interstate, pre-railroad transportation centers and a never-ending source of power to run mills and generate electricity.

Though their transportation and power-generating capacity has long been eclipsed by other technologies, riverfronts are still economic development opportunities for cities like Kalamazoo.

The city of Kalamazoo plans to revitalize a portion of its riverfront, approximately 30 acres near downtown, with a "new urban" mix of residential, business and recreational construction. A project like that can only hope to be successful if derelict industrial property along the river is claimed and cleaned up.

But riverfront development can only hope to become more attractive to investors if the riverbed and floodplain aren't loaded with PCBs.

It is unrealistic to demand that every last bit of PCB be removed from the Kalamazoo River.

The debate continues over whether to remove four dams between Plainwell and Allegan, around which most of the PCBs are said to be accumulated. Some want the dams removed and the soils around their foundations dredged. Others say that removing the dams will only dislodge the contaminated sediments, sending them toward Lake Michigan, which has already been polluted by the Kalamazoo River.

We expect that whatever plan the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency develops for the cleanup of the Kalamazoo River will not be a money-is-no-object approach. Nor should it be. As the cost of any project goes up, there is a point of diminishing return.

And any remediation plan should not make the problem worse by stirring up contaminated sediments and sending them downstream.

Much could be learned from a plan to clean up a 40-mile stretch of the Hudson River in New York state, also contaminated with PCBs. Unfortunately, the six-year project to dredge the Hudson River isn't scheduled to begin until 2006. The start of the project has been delayed by years of legal wrangling, and will be far too late for EPA officials to learn from in order to make a timely decision about the Kalamazoo River.

But after all the delays, the EPA shouldn't wait another 13 years to begin the Kalamazoo River cleanup.



Kalamazoo River Watershed Council

established 1993

724 West Centre Avenue ■ Suite 204 ■ Portage, Michigan 49024
Phone: 269.327.4008 ■ fax: 269.327.4101 ■ email: kalriver@kalriver.org

Watershed Winter News Brief

Feb. 2004

PCB PRIMER UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Board of Directors

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Steve Hamilton

Robert Whitesides

Support Staff

Eric Kerney

The Kalamazoo
River Watershed
Council is
a 501(c)3 non-
profit organization.

Our purpose is to
work with groups,
individuals, elected
officials, and
government
agencies to protect
and improve the
quality of the
Kalamazoo River,
its Watershed, and
the Lake Michigan
Basin.

With a special allocation of funds from our EPA Technical Assistance Grant, the Watershed Council has commissioned the preparation of a basic presentation on PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). **Dr. Charles Ide**, a well-published professor on PCB research at Western Michigan University will prepare the presentation for use in education and environmental workshops.

Historic PCB contamination of the Kalamazoo River is the reason why 80 plus miles of the river from Comstock to Lake Michigan have been designated a Federal Superfund Site. Due to the River's contribution of pollutants to Lake Michigan, it has also been named an Area of Concern by the Great Lakes Commission and the International Joint Commission.

The Watershed Council hopes to soon be making use of Dr. Ide's presentation in a **public education campaign** to coincide with the EPA's effort to design a reasonable and acceptable plan cleaning up the river.

PLAINWELL PAPER SETTLEMENT ANNOUNCED

In November of 2003 the USEPA announced that a settlement had been reached in its claim against Plainwell Inc. and Plainwell Holding Company, known as the "Plainwell Parties", which have a financial liability in what used to be known as the Simpson Plainwell Paper Company. **Terms of the agreement call for a Settlement of just over \$7 million, and about \$900,000 for Natural Resource Damages.**

The Watershed Council has learned that there are still some process issues connected to the Settlement that have yet to be worked out, but when those issues are resolved those funds being received by the USEPA will be available for restoration work in the Kalamazoo River Watershed.

2004 KANOE THE KAZOO

In addition to the Cleanup, the 2004 edition of Kanoë the Kazoo will include **paddling trips on a number of tributaries**, including the North and South Branch of the Kalamazoo above Albion, the Battle Creek River, Portage Creek, Rabbit River, and several others. Since these smaller streams are often too low for paddling later in the summer, the plan is to get on them this spring, primarily in May and early June. So get your boat and come out and join us!

Eric Kerney, the Watershed Council Coordinator is also working on a canoe guide with information collected from the Canoe trips. Detailed information will be available at the Watershed Council Office, as well as from Doug Carter, MSU Extension Land and Water Program at the Kellogg Biological Station. (269) 671-2412 ex 227

WATERSHED WIDE CLEANUP

For several years there has been a very well-organized and successful Kalamazoo River cleanup in the Battle Creek - Marshall Area on the first weekend in October. As part of the 2004 Kanoe the Kazoo Expedition, this effort will be expanded to involve the whole watershed, from the upstream reaches near Homer and beyond, all the way to Lake Michigan.

The Watershed Council will provide the overall planning and coordination while groups up and down the river will take responsibility for particular sections. We especially need volunteers and cooperating groups from the Plainwell and Otsego areas!

The initial discussions will get under way as part of the next Kanoe the Kazoo meeting on **Friday, February 27 at the Nature Center**. If you would like to take part in the planning please contact the Council Office at (269) 327-4008, or email Rich Koster at richkoster2@aol.com.

WATERSHED COUNCIL HAPPENINGS...

A Vital member of the KRWC team has decided to take a break and retire from the Board of Directors, our marvelous Treasurer, **Al Campbell**. Al has done a tremendous job over the years, and indeed is one of only two persons remaining from the original Public Advisory Committee that was set up to deal with the PCB issue back in 1993.

Al is irreplaceable but we do need to "take care of business". We are always hoping to have more volunteers to serve on the Board or one of our committees, and right now it would be wonderful if someone would get in touch with us and offer to pick up the torch and provide some help in this area.

We do welcome two new members on our team - not yet Board members but we are hoping they will be soon. **Scott Markham** is a Parchment resident, an avid angler, and owner of the Jumpin' Smallie Bass Guide Service, and is very concerned about the campaign to once again make the Kalamazoo a destination fishery for the whole region.

Also joining the effort is **Patricia Endsley Fenn**, a local artist who designed and hosted the River Photography Exhibit and Competition at our October Riverfest. Patricia is working on a new logo for the Council, as well as a unique watershed guide in a creative and marketable format.

Current members of the Board of Directors include Chairman Rich Koster, Vice-Chairman Bob Beck, Steve Hamilton, and Bob Whitesides. We also acknowledge Bob Whitesides on his recent success in reporting illegal silt erosion in the Watershed. Our monthly meetings are held the Fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm, at the Council Office in Portage. All Board meetings are open to the public and we especially encourage other Council members to come and take part, and to consider becoming Board members as well.

KALAMAZOO RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Protecting & Improving
the Kalamazoo River,
its Watershed, and the
Lake Michigan Basin

You can help...

Know Your Watershed

What is a Watershed?

- ◆ A *watershed* is defined as all the land that drains to a river or lake
- ◆ All of the rivers and streams in the *watershed* flow to the Kalamazoo River, and eventually to Lake Michigan
- ◆ The Great Lakes belong to everyone, and what you do makes a difference to keep them clean!
- ◆ Our *watershed* is important because we rely on its water for drinking, recreation, tourism, and industry

Watershed Facts

- ◆ The land area of the Kalamazoo River *watershed* is over 2,000 square miles, larger than the state of Delaware
- ◆ Approximately 500,000 people live in the *watershed* region
- ◆ The *watershed* encompasses portions of 11 different counties
- ◆ The River originates in Hillsdale County, its two main branches join in Albion, where it travels 138 miles to its mouth at Lake Michigan

WHY ARE WE CONCERNED?

Since the 1800's, people have used the abundant water resources of the Kalamazoo River to dispose of waste. In 1950 a massive fish kill on the Kalamazoo River was featured on the cover of Life Magazine. The condition and appearance of the river are greatly improved from the past. However, toxic chemicals called polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), discharged years ago from local paper mills still contaminate the river and its sediments. Years of study on the river have documented hazardous levels of PCBs in the fish and wildlife that live in and near the river.

The Michigan Department of Community Health has issued fish consumption advisories on the River for 25 years. An 85 mile stretch of the river has been designated an Area Of Concern (AOC) to the Great Lakes. This has resulted in the development of the Kalamazoo River Remedial & Preventative Action Plan (RAP). The RAP uses a holistic ecosystem approach to define problems and identify solutions to restore the Kalamazoo River and its *watershed*. In 1990 the Kalamazoo River was placed on the National Priorities (Superfund) List, which contains the worst toxic waste sites in the country.

The Kalamazoo River Watershed Council focuses upon four key areas to improve water quality.

- * **PCB Contamination**
- * **Nonpoint Source Pollution**
- * **Habitat Loss & Degradation**
- * **Land Use**

The Solution starts with you!
Be responsible

- ◆ Do not dump used oil or chemicals on the ground or down storm sewers, they flow to our rivers and lakes!
- ◆ Keep grass at least 3 inches high, it can survive with less water & fertilizer
- ◆ Choose less harmful alternatives to harsh chemical products in the home.
- ◆ Use compact fluorescent lightbulbs, use less electricity
- ◆ Conserve water, pick up pet wastes, drive your car less, ride a bike!

THE KALAMAZOO RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL IS A CITIZEN-BASED PARTNERSHIP OF INDIVIDUALS, STAKEHOLDERS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Select Accomplishments

◆ In 1997 the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council (KRWC) approached the USEPA and requested that emergency action be taken at the Bryant Mill Pond. The Mill Pond was eliminated as a source of high-level PCBs to the river.

◆ The KRWC initiated the installation of fish consumption advisory signs along the river in 1998, and have ensured their update and replacement. We have recently worked in conjunction with elected officials to produce copies of the Michigan Family Fish Consumption Advisory Guide.

◆ In 2000 the KRWC co-sponsored "Addressing Public Health Concerns at the Watershed Level," a conference which highlighted methods to address environmental health issues through local watershed planning.

◆ We have held eight successful River Roundtable meetings, to keep the community informed, and gather citizen input on the River cleanup process

We Need Your Help!

The KRWC can only effectively protect the watershed with participation and involvement from the community. New strategies must be developed to address the complex problems that impair the Kalamazoo River. We need your support to achieve a thorough River Cleanup! Please take a moment to fill out the form below and mail it to the KRWC. The River legacy we leave for future generations is our choice.

I want to be a River Giver!

Yes! I would like to help the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council pursue a fishable and swimmable Kalamazoo River. I've enclosed my donation of:

☐ \$100+ River Guard ☐ \$50 Donor

☐ \$25 Member ☐ \$15 Basic

☐ Other: \$ printed on
recycled paper

Name(s):

Address:

City:

State: Zip:

Email:

Cut on the dotted line and mail to:

Kalamazoo River Watershed Council
724 West Centre Avenue, Ste. 204
Kalamazoo, MI 49002 • (269) 327-4008
kalamazoo_river@hotmail.com

www.kalcounty.com/watershed/watershed.htm

The KRWC is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax-deductible.